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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001329

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [KCRS](#) [KPAO](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE CALLS FOR RAPID
REOPENING OF GAS STATIONS, BANKS, HOSPITALS

REF: BAGHDAD 1262

Classified By: Ambassador Timothy Carney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: At the April 13 session of the Iraq Executive Steering Committee, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs Barham Salih called the April 12 bombing of the Council of Representatives (CoR) troubling from a security standpoint, but a unifying event for the CoR. Sarafiya bridge, also bombed April 12, needs to be rebuilt ASAP, he added, and appealed to donors for assistance. Banks, hospitals, and gas stations should be re-opened as a matter of priority, to help normalize daily life as soon as possible. The Media Committee must re-double efforts to communicate good news to the population to counteract negative events such the CoR and Sarafiya bridge bombings. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Dr. Barham Salih, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs (DPM) chaired the April 13 session of the Iraq Executive Steering Committee. Also attending: Abd al-Qader Mohammed, Minister of Defense (MoD); Jawad al-Bolanie, Minister of Interior (MoI); Wijdan Mikhail Salim, Minister of Human Rights (MoHR); Hoshyar Zebari, Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA); Ali al-Shamarri, Minister of Health (MoH); a representative of the Ministry of Trade (MoT); LT General Aboud, Baghdad Operational Commander (BOC); a representative for Vice President Adel Abd al-Mahdi; Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubaie, National Security Advisor (NSA); Shirwan al-Waili, Minister of Transportation (and also of National Security); Hashim al-Hasani, on behalf of the Council of Representatives (CoR); a representative for Ahmed Chalabi, Popular Mobilization Committee; Naseer Alaa'nai, Former VP of INA; Yasin Majeed, Head of GOI Media Committee; Naim Aboub, Deputy Mayor of Baghdad; Dhia Zoubai, DPM al-Zubai Chief of Staff; Ali Abd al-Aziz, Chairman of I-ESC Deputies' Committee; MNF-I CG Petraeus; Rear Admiral Mark Fox, MNF-I StratCom; and Ambassador Tim Carney, Coordinator for Economic Transition in Iraq (CETI).

Security

¶3. (C) Despite the twin bombings of April 12 (the CoR and the Sarafiya Bridge), General Aboud said that security is improving in many areas of Baghdad, noting that services must follow quickly. In particular, internally displaced persons IDP's should be supported, mosques, banks and roads should be re-opened, and VIPs should visit these areas with the media. Daura Bank, for example, is secure and ready to open. DPM Salih said the GOI must complete a thorough review of the events leading up to the Council of Representatives (CoR) bombing to ensure it does not happen again. However, from a political perspective, it was a unifying event for the CoR.

¶4. (U) DPM Salih noted that Baghdad Security Plan ("Fardh al-Qanoon" or FAQ) could support the reconstruction of the

Sarafiya Bridge, which must be rebuilt ASAP. He stressed the need for inter-ministerial coordination and to secure other bridges from attacks. The Ministry of Culture is insisting on leading on the reconstruction of the Mutannabi Street book market. DPM Salih requested assistance from USAID, USACE, and any other relevant entity and recommended establishing a working group to coordinate efforts (NOTE: the working group met April 16. END NOTE).

¶5. (SBU) VP Abd al-Mahdi's representative said the Political Committee will finish in May a document connecting action on militias and de-Baathification to FAQ. He also noted that outsiders, working through countries like Syria, are spending large amounts of money to support insurgents, adding that FAQ is threatened by those who believe the U.S. will consider leaving Iraq if FAQ fails. Insurgents are also increasingly funded through business operations within Iraq.

Getting and Staying on Message

¶6. (SBU) CoR representative Hashim al-Hasani reported that MoFA Zeybari has prepared a letter outlining developments and successes in the FAQ to provide suggestions for Iraqi Ambassadors to better support FAQ efforts abroad, especially among Iraqi diaspora who may support the opposition. Al-Hasani said the GOI must unify its political message, both inside and outside the government, since they tend to fight the GOI and MNF-I when not included. Yasin Majeed, head of the GOI Media Committee, noted that his committee is small and limited in its capabilities.

¶7. (U) Rear Admiral Mark Fox, MNF-I Director of Strategic Communications, noted that the Media Committee laid out a

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plan to cover developments in essential services. IESC Media Sub-Committee Deputies will meet to develop a structure. NSA al-Rubaie and Abd al-Aziz both urged a representative of the Media Committee to participate in Deputies' IESC, something they rarely do.

Normalizing Daily Life: Parking, Banks, Barriers and Jobs

¶8. (U) Banks and Parking: DPM Salih said that re-opening banks must also be a high priority, adding that two banks in Daura are ready to re-open. Amariya Bank, however, still required work. Deputy Baghdad Mayor Aboub noted a large number of unlicensed garages in Baghdad. DPM Salih charged the Amanat and MoT to come up with a timetable for their removal.

¶9. (SBU) Barriers: General Aboud said the GOI has identified for re-opening the first 11 of 87 blocked streets in Baghdad. Several people noted that selective barrier removal can make people feel singled out and more insecure, as was the case when barriers around the home of Sunni politician Adnan al-Dulemi were recently removed. Two-thirds of Abu Nawas Street should re-open Sunday, an event Aboud asked be widely covered by the media as an important step in normalization.

¶10. (U) Hospitals: The Popular Mobilization Committee agreed with Haifa Street residents to support opening the local hospital. They hope to open two more hospitals in Baghdad the week of April 16 and are working with the Red Crescent to transport patients to the re-opened facilities. Three more hospitals (Karkh, Karama and Kindi) might not be ready to re-open because they are either destroyed, un-secure, or in abandoned areas. MoH Ali al-Shamarri questioned who pays for salary increases to doctors and nurses: MoF through the FAQ budget or MoH through its existing budget.

¶11. (SBU) Jobs and Gas Stations: MOI Jawad al-Bolanie noted that, although some government employees are not working for security reasons, others are simply using security as an

excuse not to work. He urged members to enforce requirements that employees report to work consistently when security is not an issue. Gas station closures, whether caused by insurgent activity or fuel shortages, cause hardship for the people who must go to other areas for fuel.

Quality of Life

¶12. (SBU) DPM Salih noted that some areas did not receive their allotted rations under the Public Distribution System (PDS). The MoT representative countered that PDS rations are available, but some local representatives are too afraid to come pick them up. MoT announced that all of Baghdad will receive double rations April 15. An additional 100,000 packets of emergency rations (worth a total of \$1 million) are also available. The Popular Mobilization representative said that his committee can start distributing the emergency rations the week of April 15, once needy recipients were identified.

¶13. (C) Detainees: DPM Salih asserted that illness (including leprosy) among many detainees being turned over from the Ministries of Defense and Interior to the Ministry of Justice must be addressed before it becomes a serious political problem. MoHR Wijdan Mikhail Salim said that a lack of permanent judges and inadequate transportation are causing massive overcrowding at a number of detention facilities. She requested that detainee release or transfer to MoJ not be held up pending "national reconciliation" efforts, which are moving too slowly.

¶14. (C) CG Petraeus responded that detainees under MNF-I control are well cared for, but detainee populations are rising due to increased security measures without concurrent increased capacity in the judicial system capacity to process detainees - something with which MNF-I is helping MoJ. MOI al-Bolanie admitted that, despite some progress, more needs to be done. DPM Salih reaffirmed that MoHR must have access to prisons.

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